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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to assess the relationship between printed t-shirts and communication apprehension. In the first phase of the study, self-reports were used to categorize 206 college students as either high or low in communication apprehension. The second phase of the study consisted of others' evaluations of t-shirts worn by selected subjects from the first phase (22 ranked high and 22 ranked low in communication apprehension). Results indicated that the perceived uniqueness of a t-shirt is positively correlated with its comment provoking potential. Additionally, the results supported the hypotheses that those people identified as high in communication apprehension have fewer comment provoking t-shirts and wear them less often than do people low in communication apprehension. The findings indicated that the comment provoking potential of any clothing item may be an important underlying nonverbal dimension of the interaction of clothing consciousness and clothing choice. (RL)

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THE COMMENT-PROVOKING POTENTIAL OF T-SHIRTS: A NONVERBAL DIMENSION OF COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION

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THE COMMENT-PROVOKING POTENTIAL OF T-SHIRTS
A NONVERBAL DIMENSION OF COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION

One of the first demands placed on interacting strangers is their need to acquire information about one another.[1] Because we know nothing of a stranger when we first meet, we are usually unsure of how to act as well as unsure of how the other will act or behave in response to our actions. Berger and Calabrese suggest that the basic need of all interacting strangers is to reduce the uncertainty they feel, not only about each other, but also about the encounter itself.[2] As Goffman suggests, "information about the individual helps to define the situation, enabling others to know in advance what he will expect of them and what they may expect of him."[3]

Of the many sources of information available to interacting strangers, the outward appearance of the other is perhaps the primary source to which an observer will attend to begin his or her information search.[4] One element of a person's appearance that is immediately available to any stranger is the way in which the person is dressed. Clothing, as does the other elements of Goffman's appearance component (e.g., age or sex), "tells" the astute observer something about the other's various "social statuses."[5] Clothing can, for example, tell the observer something of how the other defines his or her role, or how formal or informal the other considers the encounter to be.

In his discussion of Mead's meaning of "meaningful interaction," Stone proposes that social interaction can only be meaningful if it meets the requirements of identification. By "identification" he means the mutually interdependent process of identification <u>of</u> the other and identification <u>with</u> the other. Identification <u>with</u> another cannot be made unless identification

is first made of the other. We cannot begin to take the other's perspective until we can somehow identify who the other person is or what role the other person is playing at the time of the encounter. "Above all, identifications of one another are ordinarily facilitated by appearance and are often accomplished silently or non-verbally."[6] Appearance (i.e., clothing) becomes a medium or symbol through which an observer can unobtrusively learn about a stranger, thereby enabling the observer to begin identifying the stranger before him or her.

Although proceeding from a different theoretical prospective than either Goffman[7] or Stone,[8] Altman and Taylor include appearance in their concentric circle model of the social penetration process. Between the inside-of-the-skin person and the environment-at-large is a boundary area composed of a person's clothing. The authors stipulate that the behaviors associated with clothing choices "contribute to the creation of an interpersonal image and initial contact with the social environment, thereby setting the stage for interaction."[9] Clothes are used as a prop to aid in the presentation of one's self to other people.

The information we seek to acquire during the initial phase of an encounter with a stranger allows us to begin to explain and predict the other's behavior. The ability to explain and subsequently predict another's behavior during an interaction results in the reduction of uncertainty about the other and the encounter. Before any verbal signs or symbols are exchanged between strangers, each perceives and assigns meaning to the nonverbal attributes of the other. These interpretations provide the information by which uncertainty about the other is initially reduced. The research presented in this paper is based on the premise that the process by which we reduce uncertainty about

a stranger begins when we first take into account the stranger's appearance as expressed through his or her clothes.

The importance of clothing as a nonverbal medium through which information is, or may be, communicated to observers has been extensively examined. Burgoon and Saine suggest that, of all body adornments, "clothing is probably the most meaningful as a communication medium."[10] Items of clothing serve a multiplicity of functions from the environmentally practical (e.g., wearing a raincoat to keep one dry) to the expression of a personal whim or fancy (e.g., wearing a long, flowing scarf for decoration à la Isadora Duncan). As Gibbons concluded though, "Any of the functions suggested, however, can be seen to be special cases of one general phenomenon namely, that clothes act as a medium of communication, and the different functions suggested previously are simply different messages which can be sent by means of clothes."[11]

Research on how clothing functions as a communication medium is based on whose perceptions of the communicative importance of the clothing are used as a data base. The first involves the wearer's perception of what his or her clothes communicate or are intended to communicate. The second involves others' (i.e., observers) responses to or perceptions of a particular target person's clothes. The first trend will be referred to as self-oriented, the second as other-oriented.

The self-oriented approach has led to correlation studies based on self-report measures of various personality traits and perceptions about clothing or the reasons for choosing and wearing particular items of clothing.[12] Strong relationships between a number of personality attributes and self-reported perceptions of clothing use and fashion consciousness have been discovered. People report that they are able to express themselves through

the clothes that they choose to wear and that their choices are related to their self-concepts.

The research of Rosenfeld and Plax indicates that we are aware of the reactions others have to the clothes that we wear. The authors included three items on a questionnaire about clothing use that assessed self-perceptions about the notice others give:

1) People whom I know always notice what I wear.

2) (Women) I think that most men "notice" what a woman is wearing.
(Men) I think that most women "notice" what a man is wearing.

3) I like to try out new "effects" in my clothing which others will admire and envy.[13]

The first and second items imply that others will comment on (i.e., "notice") certain articles of clothing. Clothes often function to draw attention to the individual wearer. Different clothing choices will result in varying degrees of notice or attention paid by an observer.

The third item that Rosenfeld and Plax used to assess notice implies that there is an uniqueness component (i.e., new "effects") that guides clothing choices. The underlying dimension of clothing use tapped by this item appears to be that the more unique an item is judged to be, the more likely it becomes that others will comment upon the item. Very simply, uniqueness begets attention. Rosenfeld and Plax touched upon a dimension of clothing use that has not been explicitly examined by those using the self-oriented approach to the study of the nonverbal dimensions of clothing, that is, the comment-provoking potential of the clothes we chose to wear.

Those using the other-oriented approach have also neglected the comment-provoking potential of different clothing choices. The other-oriented approach focuses on the judgments others make about personality based on the

clothing they see a particular target person wearing. Clothing has been found to influence the perceptions of socioeconomic status,[14] sexual attitudes,[15] group identity,[16] and judgments concerning perceived credibility.[17] The results indicate that clothing serves as a reliable and consistent nonverbal cue that allows an observer to begin categorizing the wearer on a variety of social and psychological traits. The results do not indicate, however, if clothing choices differ in their comment-provoking potential.

It seems reasonable to suggest that the more unique an item of clothing is perceived to be, the more likely it is that the wearer will find him or her self the target for comments about the item. Given this assumption, people may well choose the clothes they wear based on how much or how little they want to draw attention to themselves; how much or how little they enjoy interacting with others.

"How much" someone enjoys interacting with others, especially strangers, has been most recently conceptualized by the construct of communication apprehension (CA). A tremendous outpouring of speech communication research has focused on communication apprehension.[18] Communication apprehension, "an individual's level of fear and anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons," subsumes five theoretical propositions. The second and perhaps most central, is that "people with high oral CA seek to avoid oral communication."[19] The findings of numerous studies summarized by McCroskey provide empirical support for the proposition in that people classified as high in CA do seem to avoid situations in which they will have to interact with others, more so than do those categorized as being low in CA.[20]

Given the proposition that people with high oral CA do seek to avoid communication with others and the assumption that the more unique an item of clothing is judged to be, the more likely an observer will be to comment, the author hypothesized that people with high oral CA will prefer clothing that is less likely to attract attention than people with low oral CA. That is, people with high oral CA will select and wear clothes that are less unique and have, therefore, a lower comment-provoking potential than the clothes chosen by people low in oral CA.

If clothing items, in their various forms, function as symbols to which meanings are attributed either by wearer, observer, or both, the printed T-shirt must surely occupy an unique symbolic position. The pictures or slogans printed on a T-shirt serve, not only to increase the selling price, but also reflect the "wearer's whims and wheezes, concerns, complaints, sentiments, politics and anything else he or she may want to promote, profess, or proclaim."[21] The rise in popularity of the T-shirt, as a staple item of clothing without which one's wardrobe would be considered incomplete, has been well documented by the popular press.[22]

Indeed, a recent cartoon depicting four salespersons in a sporting goods store wearing T-shirts and the caption "Hey boss--there's a weirdo out here who wants a T-shirt without words" accurately reflects the ubiquitous popularity of the message-bearing T-shirt.[23] That Pope John II's countenance appeared on T-shirts, thereby unofficially commemorating his visit to America, speaks to the range of topics deemed suitable to wear on one's chest or back.

By the same token, printed T-shirts can afford an observer immediate access to a wealth of information that would perhaps not be exchanged verbally during the entry phase of an initial encounter. When strangers meet,

the first few minutes are generally spent in rather superficial discourse heavily dependent on the exchange of demographic data.[24] It is conceivable that the information conveyed by a printed T-shirt might instigate an exchange on a more personal level than that which might occur if the T-shirt had not been worn. As items of a personal front, T-shirts tell something about how the wearer views him or her self and allow others to make what would appear to be reasonably accurate predictions regarding the wearer. Observing that the stranger you meet wears a T-shirt with the words, "Smoking Pot is NORMAL" reduces a great deal of uncertainty that might not otherwise be reduced during the entry phase of the initial encounter. The T-shirt might "say" more about the person than that person might verbally allow during the initial exchange with a stranger.

Even T-shirts that convey only demographic data, such as the college the wearer attends or attended, can function as conversation initiaters for strangers. Consider the following fictional interlude:

> Upon completing the requirements for her Ph.D at the University of Texas, Paula Professor traveled to the University of Maine for her first job. Shortly after her arrival, Paula joined a faculty intramural volleyball team. During her first game, she noticed that one of the opponents wore a bright orange T-shirt with the slogan, "Hook 'em Horns," printed on the front. When they were playing opposite one another at the net, Paula asked the stranger if he was from Texas. The stranger answered that he had attended UT, which led to further inquiries, which, in turn, led to a tavern where they shared a pitcher of beer and lamented the lack of a decent Mexican restaurant.

Whether the fictional meeting between two strangers depicted above progresses beyond the initial or entry phase of relationship development hinges on more than attendance at the same university. The sharing of such a demographic coincidence did, however, provide an initial topic of conversation to which both parties could contribute. That the stranger was wearing a

T-shirt that invited comment enabled Paula to initiate the interaction. The T-shirt functioned as a conversation starter in that it provided an impetus to approach a stranger.

Given the variety of printed T-shirts available, it seems reasonable to assume that some would be more likely to invite comment than others. Certainly, some the author has seen are more unique and creative than others. This assumption must be tempered, however, in that the degree to which a T-shirt is different depends on the context in which it is seen. Had the characters in the fictional example presented above been playing volleyball at the University of Texas, the stranger's T-shirt would probably not have provoked a comment. Because the T-shirt was out-of-context, it became a clue by which some rudimentary identification of the other could begin.

T-shirts, perhaps moreso than other clothing choices, can be evaluated as to their uniqueness, which can be used, in turn, to indicate the probability that a particular T-shirt seen in a particular context will evoke comment. The more unique or different the printed message, the more likely it becomes that comments will be made, and the more likely the wearer will find him or her self interacting with others. Given the proposition that people with high oral CA do seek to avoid oral communication with others and the assumption that the more unique (or out-of-context) the T-shirt, the more likely an observer will be to initiate an interaction by commenting on the T-shirt's message, the following research question guided the study: Do the T-shirts worn by people high in CA differ from those worn by people who are low in CA?

This question lent itself to the following hypotheses:

H_1: The uniqueness of a printed T-shirt will be positively related to the probability that the T-shirt will provoke comments.

H_2: Those persons identified as high communication apprehensives will have fewer T-shirts that evoke comment than will those persons low in communication apprehension.

H_3: Those persons identified as high communication apprehensives will wear their unique T-shirts less often than will those persons low in communication apprehension.

METHOD

In order to assess the relationship between T-shirts and communication apprehension, the research was conducted in two phases which resulted in the generation of two data bases. The first involved self-report responses by subjects (Ss) categorized as either high or low communication apprehensives. The second data base consisted of others' evaluations of the Ss' T-shirts. Using a series of Likert-type scale items, untrained observers assessed the comment-provoking potential of the T-shirts. Both self and other data bases were generated so that maximum confidence could be placed in the results.

Phase One

At the beginning of a semester, 206 undergraduates enrolled in a variety of communication and theatre courses at a four-year university, completed a series of personality measures, one of which was McCroskey's Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA).[25] The PRCA was selected because its theoretic foundation was conceptually consistent with the theoretic assumptions that guided the formulation of the research purpose. The PRCA has also been shown to be both a reliable and valid self-report measure.[26] Using McCroskey's suggested guidelines for interpreting PRCA scores, those students who scored at least one standard deviation below

the group mean were classified as low apprehensives (LCA) and those who scored at least one standard deviation above the mean were classified as high apprehensives (HCA).[27]

Two months after the initial evaluation, randomly chosen HCA and LCA students were invited to participate in a communication research project. Twenty-two HCAs and 22 LCAs volunteered to participate in the study. The 44 volunteers attended a briefing session at which they were informed of the author's interest in T-shirts as nonverbal symbols. They were not told of the basis by which they had been chosen. All Ss agreed to let the author or an assistant photograph any T-shirt he or she owned that displayed some type of printing (e.g., words, pictures or designs). Arrangements were made for individual photograph sessions during which each T-shirt was pinned against a white background, assigned an identification number and photographed with 35mm color film at a distance of approximately four feet. As each T-shirt was photographed, Ss were asked a series of questions concerning the amount the T-shirt was worn and the frequency with which people commented about the printed message on the T-shirt. Ss responded to both questions, using a seven-interval Likert-type scale (almost never to almost always). At the conclusion of each session, Ss identified the T-shirt they felt evoked the greatest number of comments.

One of the recent criticisms of CA as measured by the PRCA has focused on the appropriateness of assuming that CA is a trait "that is relatively enduring and not subject to major fluctuations from one time to another."[28] Although personality traits are relatively stable over time, "no evidence has been reported to show the PRCA is stable beyond 10 days."[29] Beatty, Behnke and McCallum suggest that in order to assess trait CA, one needs to

measure an individual's apprehension over a period of time, rather than rely on a single administration of a measurement device.[30] To overcome this particular criticism, two months were allowed to elapse from the initial administration of the PRCA so that it could be readministered to the participating Ss during the briefing session. Scores were again analyzed and the one standard deviation parameter used to guide the classification of the Ss. Only those Ss whose second classification was consistent with their first were used in the final data analyses. This procedure insured that those Ss whose T-shirts were photographed were more than likely exhibiting trait CA. This double classification method resulted in a final sample of 19 HCAs and 16 LCAs.

Phase Two

The 232 T-shirts photographed from the reclassified Phase One sample were evaluated by untrained raters during the second phase of the research. The raters were student volunteers assessed as medium apprehensives during the initial administration of the PRCA.[31] The slide of each T-shirt was evaluated by at least three observers who rated the T-shirts using a seven-step Likert type scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree) on the following four items:

This T-shirt is unique.
Around (name of university), this T-shirt would cause others to comment.
This T-shirt is ordinary.
This T-shirt is different.[32]

Raters were asked to evaluate the T-shirts with the particular university setting in mind so that the context in which the T-shirt "appeared" was controlled. In order to minimize rater fatique, each observer evaluated a maximum of 35 T-shirts. All T-shirt slides were randomly assigned to a slide tray.

Estimates of interrater reliability were computed on a portion of the data evaluated by the raters. The reliability coefficients ranged from .84 to .94 and were judged to be sufficient given the nature of the research.[33]

An alpha level of .05 was used in all statistical analyses.

RESULTS

Hypothesis One

The first analysis conducted tested the assumption that different or unique T-shirts were more likely to evoke comments. The raters' responses to the four-item scale were analyzed using Pearson product-moment correlation.[34] A statistically significant positive correlation coefficient was obtained between the items "This T-shirt is unique" and "Around _____, this T-shirt would cause others to comment ($r=.71$, $p<.05$). Similarly, a statistically significant positive correlation coefficient was obtained between the items "This T-shirt is different" and "Around _____, this T-shirt would cause others to comment ($r=.70$, $p<.05$)." Additionally, a statistically significant negative correlation coefficient was obtained between the items "This T-shirt is ordinary" and "Around _____, this T-shirt would cause others to comment ($r=-.68$, $p<.05$)."[35]

Hypothesis Two

A second series of data analyses was conducted to assess the validity of the assumption that HCAs will have fewer comment-provoking T-shirts than LCAs. Rather than rely on a single measure to assess the validity of the hypothesis (e.g., a simple frequency comparison of the number of commented-upon T-shirts) four data analyses were performed. This multi-analytic approach afforded more

confidence in the results as well as allowed for the examination of some of the more subtle nuances of the relationship between T-shirt behavior and CA.

The mean number of T-shirts owned by HCAs and LCAs was compared to determine if there were differences solely in the number of T-shirts with some type of printed message owned by the two groups. The results of a *t*-test ($t=5.85$, $p < .05$) produced a statistically significant difference between the mean number of printed T-shirts photographed for HCAs ($\bar{x}=3.79$, SD=2.78) and LCAs ($\bar{x}=9.81$, SD=3.31).[36] The correlation coefficient *eta* was computed indicating that approximately 47% (eta^2) of the variance in the number of printed T-shirts owned by the members of each group is attributable to that member's CA level.

The second analysis was conducted to determine which group perceived its T-shirts to be more comment-provoking. A *t*-test ($t=2.51$, $p < .05$) revealed that LCAs ($\bar{x}=4.12$, SD=1.96) perceived that their T-shirts evoked significantly more comments than did those belonging to HCAs ($\bar{x}=3.37$, SD=2.06). Calculation of the *eta* statistic resulted in a coefficient of .207 ($eta^2=.04$).

A subsequent analysis of only those T-shirts which evoked more than an average number of comments (i.e. responses greater than four on the seven point scale with seven representing "always comment") was performed. A significant difference in the number of T-shirts evoking more than average comments was found ($t=3.67$, $p < .05$). LCAs ($\bar{x}=4.0$, SD=2.39) had more than twice as many such T-shirts as did HCAs ($\bar{x}=1.5$, SD=1.64). Calculation of the *eta* statistic resulted in a coefficient of .434 ($eta^2=.19$).

A final comparison was made of the T-shirts *Ss* identified as the ones that provoked the most comments from other people. A significant difference was found between the two groups regarding the frequency of comments received about the most commented upon T-shirt ($t=2.41$, $p < .05$). LCAs ($\bar{x}=6.21$, SD=.80)

reported that the most commented upon T-shirt received substantially more comments than did similar T-shirts owned by HCAs ($\bar{x}$=4.93, SD=1.83). Calculation of the eta statistic resulted in a coefficient of .522 (eta^2=.27).

Hypothesis Three

Using both the Ss' and raters' perceptions, analyses were performed to test H_3 that HCAs would wear their more unique T-shirts less frequently than would LCAs. Although Ss did not directly report their self-perceptions about the uniqueness of their T-shirts, they did report on the frequency with which they perceived each T-shirt provoked comments from other people. Given the assumption that uniqueness will provoke comments, the self perceptions about the communication-provoking potential of each T-shirt was used as a secondary measure of that T-shirt's apparent uniqueness. All T-shirts that Ss identified as being worn more than average (i.e., a response greater than four on the seven-step self-report scale) were isolated for comparison. The results of a t-test revealed no statistically significant differences between the two groups in the frequency of comments provoked by those T-shirts.

The T-shirts that Ss identified as ones that were worn more than average were also evaluated by the peer raters. The results of these evaluations revealed statistically significant differences between the two groups on all four scale items. Those T-shirts LCAs reportedly wore more often were seen as more unique (t=2.50, $p < .05$), more likely to cause comment (t=2.73, $p < .05$), more different (t=3.21, p .05), and less ordinary (t=2.61, $p < .05$) than those worn more often by HCAs. All means and standard deviations are shown in Table 1.

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DISCUSSION

Hypothesis One

The first hypothesis assumed that the uniqueness of a T-shirt would be positively related to the T-shirt's comment-provoking potential. In order to assess this assumption, members of the same community from which the HCA and LCA Ss were drawn evaluated each T-shirt slide using a four-item, seven-step scale. The results of a correlation analysis supported the hypothesis. Those T-shirts raters evaluated as either more unique or different correlated positively with their perceptions that those particular T-shirts would evoke comments. Alternately, those T-shirts raters evaluated as being more ordinary correlated negatively with their perceptions that those particular T-shirts would evoke comments.

Based on the evaluations of 232 T-shirts, it appears reasonable to conclude that an assessment of the uniqueness of a T-shirt can be used to indicate the probability that that T-shirt will evoke a comment from another person. Given the context of a university, a T-shirt with the name of the school is not only perceived as ordinary, but when worn, will not evoke comments from the other members of the community. One that is perceived as different, however, (e.g., a female Ss presented one with the slogan "The more I'm around men, the better I like my dog") will evoke numerous comments.

Burgoon and Seine suggest that the dimensions of dress most relevant to communication have yet to be adequately identified.[37] The results of the data used to test H_1 suggest that one of the important nonverbal functions of dress might well be the comment-provoking potential of a particular clothing item or combination of items. As previously discussed, Rosenfeld and Plax

included three items on a questionnaire about clothing use that assessed the notice others give to our clothing choices. When the data generated from responses to their questionnaire were factor analyzed, all three items loaded on a broader factor labled "clothing consciousness, the degree to which an individual is concerned with his or her clothes."[38] In that "notice" only implies a behavioral intent to comment, the comment-provoking potential needs to be assessed more directly. The words "notice," "admire," and "envy" do not accurately assess perceptions of comments received.

While the comment-provoking potential of dress has been tangentially addressed, it has not been isolated for extensive study. The results of the present study indicate that the more unique a T-shirt, the more likely it is that the T-shirt will provoke others to comment. The same relationship may be true for all clothing items; the more unique or different an item is perceived to be, the more likely it becomes that it will elicit a comment from the observer. The concept may be one of the major underlying dimensions of the relationship between a person's clothing consciousness and that person's choices about the clothes he or she wears. One factor in a person's choice of clothing may well be the frequency with which others will comment upon the clothing. As such, the comment-provoking potential of any clothing item becomes an important factor in examining clothing choices and the functions of those choices as nonverbal communication cues.

Hypothesis Two

The second hypothesis was based on the theoretical proposition that HCAs will seek to avoid situations in which they will have to communicate while LCAs will actively seek such encounters. Assuming that a unique T-shirt has the potential to evoke comments, it was hypothesized that HCAs would have

fewer comment-provoking T-shirts than LCAs. Four analyses were performed to assess the validity of the hypothesis.

Analysis one. The first analysis assessed the average total number of T-shirts in each Ss wardrobe. HCAs ($\bar{x}$=3.79) had far fewer T-shirts than did LCAs ($\bar{x}$=9.81). The difference in the mean number of T-shirts was not only statistically significant, but was also one that was extremely robust. LCAs had almost two and a half times as many T-shirts with printing as did HCAs. As there were very few Ss who had two identical T-shirts in their collection, it is reasonable to conclude that LCAs had almost ten different T-shirts apiece, six more than did each HCA. This finding alone indicates that LCAs are more likely to acquire a greater variety of printed T-shirts from which to choose than are HCAs. T-shirts, as items of clothing, play a more prominent role in a LCA's wardrobe than in a HCA's.

Analysis two. The entire T-shirt wardrobes of the members of each group were compared to assess differences in the comment-provoking potential of the complete collections. A significant difference was found between the means of the two groups. HCAs reported that their T-shirts received fewer comments than did LCAs. Neither of the means, however, was of a great magnitude. LCAs reported a mean of 4.12 and HCAs reported a mean of 3.41, barely above and below, respectively, the hypothetical midpoint of four on a seven-interval scale. The rather average means are most likely the result of a wash-out effect. Even though LCAs have two and a half times more T-shirts than HCAs, the greater number does not consist solely of unique T-shirts. Apparently, LCAs have more ordinary ones as well as more unique ones. While the average HCA might have two ordinary and two somewhat unique T-shirts, the average LCA might have five unique ones, but also have five more ordinary ones. When each Ss collection is assessed, the comment-provoking potential

of the unique ones is tempered by the comment-retarding potential of the ordinary ones, thereby producing rather average, though statistically significant, means.

Analysis three. Those T-shirts Ss identified as receiving more than an average number of comments were isolated and the two groups compared. LCAs ($\bar{x}$=4.0) had more than twice as many T-shirts with greater-than-average comment-provoking potential than did HCAs ($\bar{x}$=1.5). This finding directly supports the second hypothesis. HCAs did, in fact, have fewer comment-provoking T-shirts than did LCAs. This finding is partially the result of the previous finding that LCAs simply had more T-shirts than did HCAs. It also substantiates the underlying assumption that LCAs are more likely to acquire more unique, comment-provoking T-shirts than are HCAs. In that clothing selection is a behavior, the results offer behavioral support for the validity of the CA construct.

Analysis four. At the conclusion of each photographing session, Ss were also asked to identify the T-shirt that they felt provoked the greatest number of comments from other people. Significant differences were found concerning the number of comments received when that T-shirt was isolated and the groups compared. The average number of self-reported comments received on the T-shirt identified as that which garnered the most comments was not quite one interval above the hypothetical mean of four on the seven-interval scale for HCAs ($\bar{x}$=4.93). That of the LCAs was more than two intervals greater than the hypothetical mean ($\bar{x}$=6.21).

The mean for the most commented upon T-shirt of HCAs (4.93) is not too much greater than the mean of the LCAs' entire T-shirt collection (4.12). It reportedly takes far fewer comments for HCAs to perceive a T-shirt as being the most comment-provoking than for LCAs. The number of comments a HCA considers "the most" would be just barely above average for the LCA Ss.

This finding is intriguing in that HCAs apparently perceive their communication environment in a manner that is very different from the way in which LCAs do. It it takes far less oral feedback about a T-shirt's presumed uniqueness, then it appears that it would also take less oral feedback about any clothing item for HCas to view that item as one that would cause others to comment. This finding offers further support of a behavioral nature (i.e., clothing choice) for the conceptual validity of the CA construct as well as the predictive validity of the PRCA.

Hypothesis Three

Those T-shirts Ss identified as ones worn more than average were isolated and compared. No statistically significant differences were found in the frequency with which Ss reported that the T-shirts they wore more often provoked comments. Those T-shirts HCAs reported wearing more often provoked about as many comments as those worn more often by LCAs. While it was true that HCAs had far fewer comment-provoking T-shirts than LCAs, the ones they wear more than average provoked comments as often as those worn by their LCA counterparts.

When the same "more-often-worn" T-shirts were isolated and evaluated by the peer raters, however, statistically significant differences were discovered on all four scales of the dependent measure. The T-shirts LCAs reported wearing more often were perceived as more unique, more different, more likely to cause comment, and less ordinary than those of the HCAs. The statistically significant differences obtained from analysis of the other-oriented data validate the assumption of the third hypothesis; that is, HCAs do not wear their unique, comment-provoking T-shirts as often as LCAs wear theirs. Considered in conjunction with the confirmation of H_1, these findings lend support for the second theoretic proposition of the CA construct that HCAs actively

seek to avoid situations in which they will be engaged in interaction.

The results of the data analyses used to assess the validity of H_3 are interesting in that there are distinct differences between the Ss' self-perceptions and the raters' other-perceptions. Both Ss groups perceived that the T-shirts they wore more often provoked about the same numbers of comments. When those same T-shirts were evaluated by the peer raters, however, significant differences were discovered. The T-shirts LCAs reportedly wore more often were perceived as being more unique and, subsequently, potentially more comment-provoking than those worn more often by HCAs.

Any interaction based on the uniqueness of a printed T-shirt will be initiated by someone other than the wearer. While evaluating the T-shirts, the peer raters acted as if they were the "other" who sees a T-shirt and must decide whether or not to comment. Given their other-oriented perspective, it seems reasonable to accept the raters' perceptions as a more valid indicator of the comment-provoking potential of the "worn-more-often" T-shirts. In that the raters perceived the T-shirts that LCAs reported wearing more often as significantly more unique and potentially comment-provoking than those of the HCAs, the third hypothesis was accepted.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the author hypothesized that the comment-provoking potential of our clothing choices is one of the untapped nonverbal dimensions of clothes as they relate to communication. The research was grounded in the interrelated assumptions that the perceived uniqueness of a clothing item is positively related to its comment-provoking potential and that people choose what they wear based on the degree to which they enjoy interacting with others. The

popular and pervasive printed T-shirt was chosen as a suitable clothing item for assessing the hypothesized relationship.

The results indicate that the perceived uniqueness of a T-shirt is, indeed, positively correlated with its comment-provoking potential. How much someone enjoys interacting with others was operationalized using the CA construct. Those Ss identified as HCAs had significantly fewer comment-provoking T-shirts and, as perceived by others, will more often wear T-shirts that are not as potentially comment-provoking as the ones worn more often by LCAs. The results support the assumption that differences in CA will result in differences in clothing choices about printed T-shirts. In that the process of selecting clothing is a behavior, the results also offer behavioral support for the CA construct. The results indicate the comment-provoking potential of any clothing item may be an important underlying dimension of the interaction of clothing consciousness and clothing choice. As such, the concept of comment-provoking potential is one that warrants further examination.

TABLE 1

Raters' Evaluations of T-shirts Ss'

Reportedly Wore Most Often

		HCA		LCA	
	Item	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD
1.	This T-shirt is unique.	4.07	1.94	4.66	1.74
2.	Around _____, this T-shirt would cause others to comment.	3.72	1.73	4.20	1.60
3.	This T-shirt is different.	3.85	1.70	4.55	1.62
4.	This T-shirt is ordinary.	3.97	1.62	3.46	1.45

FOOTNOTES

[1]Erving Goffman, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (New York: Doubleday, 1959); Irwin Altman and Dalmas A. Taylor, Social Penetration: The Development of Interpersonal Relationships (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973); Charles R. Berger and Richard J. Calabrese, "Some Explorations in Initial Interaction and Beyond: Toward a Developmental Theory of Interpersonal Communication," Human Communication Research, 1 (1975), 99-112.

[2]Berger and Calabrese.

[3]Goffman, 1.

[4]Goffman; Gregory P. Stone, "Appearance and the Self," in Human Behavior and Social Processes, ed. A. M. Rose (Boston: Houghron Mifflin, 1962); Altman and Taylor.

[5]Goffman, 42.

[6]Stone, 90.

[7]Goffman.

[8]Stone.

[9]Altman and Taylor, 22.

[10]Judee K. Burgoon and Thomas Saine, The Unspoken Dialogue: An Introduction to Nonverbal Communication (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978), 79.

[11]Keith Gibbins, "Communication Aspects of Women's Clothes and their Relation to Fashionability," British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 8 (1968), 302.

[12]Norma H. Compton, "Personal Attributes of Color and Design Preferences in Clothing Fabrics," Journal of Psychology, 54 (1962), 191-195; Lewis R. Aiken, Jr., "The Relationships of Dress to Selected Measures of Personality

in Undergraduate Women," The Journal of Social Psychology, 59 (1963), 119-128; Julia Ann Pinaire Reed, "Clothing as a Symbolic Indicator of the Self," DAI, 34 (1974), 3896B (Purdue University); LeBland Farris McAdams, "Masculine Self-concepts as Related to Factors of Body Adornment," DAI, 37 (1977), 3582B (Texas Woman's University); Lawrence B. Rosenfeld and Timothy G. Plax, "Clothing as Communication," Journal of Communication, 27 (1977), 24-31.

[13]Rosenfeld and Plax, 25.

[14]Mary Lou Rosencrantz, "Clothing Symbolism," Journal of Home Economics, 54 (1962), 18-22; Helen I. Douty, "Influence of Clothing on Perception of Persons," Journal of Home Economics, 55 (1963), 197-202; Joan L. Parr and Marcia S. Halperin, "Children's Impressions of the Social Meaning of Clothing," Biennial Southeastern Conference on Human Development, Atlanta, May 1979.

[15]Eugene W. Mathes and Sherry B. Kempher, "Clothing as a Nonverbal Communicator of Sexual Attitudes and Behavior," Perceptual and Motor Skills, 43, (1976), 495-498.

[16]Lois M. Gurel, June C. Wilbur and Lee Gurel, "Personality Correlates of Adolescent Clothing Styles," Journal of Home Economics, 64 (1972), 42-47.

[17]Ronald E. Bassett, Ann Q. Staton-Spicer and Jack L. Whitehead, "Effects of Source Attire on Judgments of Credibility," Central States Speech Journal, 30 (1979), 282-285.

[18]James C. McCroskey, "Oral Communication Apprehension: A Summary of Recent Theory and Research," Human Communication Research, 4 (1977), 78-96; D. Thomas Porter, "Communication Apprehension: Communication's Latest Artifact?" International Communication Association, Philadelphia, May 1979.

[19]James C. McCroskey, "Validity of the PRCA as an Index of Oral Communication Apprehension," Communication Monographs, 45 (1978), 194.

[20]McCroskey, 1978.

[21]Time Magazine, September 16, 1974, p. 72.

[22]Senior Scholastic Magazine, October 25, 1973, pp. 37-38; Seventeen Magazine, October 1975, pp. 46-47; Time Magazine, September 7, 1970, p. 41; Time Magazine, February 28, 1972, p. 64; Time Magazine, September 16, 1974, p. 72; Time Magazine, March 1, 1976, pp. 48-50.

[23]Seattle Times Newspaper, August 28, 1979.

[24]Altman and Taylor; Charles R. Berger, "The Acquaintance Process Revisited: Explorations in Initial Interaction," Speech Communication Association, New York, November 1973.

[25]McCroskey, 1978

[26]Ibid.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Ibid., 200.

[29]Porter, 13.

[30]Michael J. Beatty, Ralph R. Behnke and Karin McCallum, "Situational Determinants of Communication Apprehension," Communication Monographs, 45 (1978), 187-191.

[31]The majority of students assessed were medium apprehensives (i.e., those whose PRCA score was within the one standard deviation above or below the mean). Someone wearing a T-shirt on campus would be more likely to encounter a MCA than either a LCA or HCA. Given that characteristic of the student body, only the opinions of MCAs were solicited during Phase Two.

[32]The dependent measure originally consisted of six items. Intrarater reliabilities computed during a pretest of the instrument indicated that only the four items used were consistently reliable indicators. Reliability coefficients of .75 to .90 were obtained and judged to be acceptable given the

nature of the research. Norman H. Nie, C. Hadlai Hull, Jean G. Jenkins, Karin Steinbrenner, and Dale H. Bent, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, 2nd. ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975).

[33]Nie, et al.

[34]Ibid.

[35]The variance accounted for (r^2) by each of the three comparisons is approximately 50%, 49% and 46% respectively. Nie, et al.

[36]As direction was predicted in both H_2 and H_3 all t-tests were one-tailed. Nie, et al.

[37]Burgoon and Saine.

[38]Rosenfeld and Plax, 25-26.